

Exhibit 6

PLAINTIFF HARFORD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION OPPOSITION TO DEFENDANTS' MOTION FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT (HARFORD) (SD MSJ NO. 6)

Case No.: 4:22-md-03047-YGR

MDL No. 3047

Member Case No.: 4:23-cv-03065-YGR

In Re: Social Media Adolescent Addiction/Personal Injury Products Liability Litigation



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Sheriff says 33 threats to Harford schools in a month is reaction to fatal Joppa shooting

Matt Hubbard; Baltimore Sun

Less than a month into the new school year Harford County sheriff's deputies say they have investigated 33 threats made to public schools. It's something police say can be expected after incidents such as the fatal shooting at Joppatowne High School last month.

"When you see the shooting incidents around the country and then, unfortunately, the shooting incident we had, you can expect a reaction and more things to be shared on social media and more concerns," Harford County Sheriff Jeffrey Gahler said in an interview this week.

The majority of the threats made to Harford schools, Gahler said, are from posts on social media that are reported by parents, students and educators. Gahler explained that he and his deputies take all threats seriously and thoroughly investigate each of them.

Of the 33 threats spanning from the first day of school on Sept. 3 to Oct. 1, only three have resulted in charges. In order for someone to be charged for a school threat, Gahler said they need to "cross the line" and express a will or an intent.

"The three cases that have resulted in an arrest were juveniles making statements expressing a will about what they wanted to or intended to do and that is where it crosses the line and becomes a crime," Gahler said. "And if we can prove a crime, we are going to charge them every single time."

Gahler noted that charging students for school threats and informing the public about them serves as a tool for accountability and a deterrent.

"Hopefully it makes young people think twice because we are taking these seriously and if they indeed cross the line, there will be repercussions," Gahler said. "I hope a positive comes from us sharing these arrests and us holding people accountable for what they did."

An increased number of threats to public schools is something the sheriff's Public Information Officer, Cristie Hopkins, said is occurring statewide.

Hopkins explained that alarming screenshots and posts are commonly shared among students on social media across numerous school systems in the state. Even though a neighboring school system may have investigated a post and found no threat, if

the same post is brought to the attention of law enforcement in Harford County, Gahler said his deputies are sure to conduct a thorough investigation.

"It is a big investment to conduct these investigations and takes a lot of our resources, but we would rather be sure that it is not a threat rather than running safety risks," Gahler said. "We take every threat seriously because the one you don't, may be the one that sadly results in something bad happening."

The Harford County Sheriff's Office was unable to provide historical school threat data due to a change in their system that altered the way reports are documented.

Hopkins explained that this year, the sheriff's office has made a more concerted effort to track threats toward schools whereas in years past, cases that were not explicitly school-related but yielded threats to schools were documented differently.

"Even without the numbers for comparison, it seems like a whole lot more threats this year," Gahler said. "This year started off with just an explosion. I would certainly say we are ahead of what we were last year."

Harford's current frequency of threats following the shooting at Joppatowne High School that killed 15-year-old Warren Grant is similar to what Anne Arundel County faced after a school shooting in Georgia in early September that killed two students and two teachers.

Anne Arundel County Police investigated 22 threats to public schools while neighboring counties such as Carroll, Howard and Baltimore City also saw an uptick in school threats.

Conversations regarding school safety have become a statewide topic with many in Harford County calling for clear backpacks and the installation of metal detectors.

Currently all Harford middle and high schools are equipped with student resource officers. These officers are sheriff's deputies who are stationed inside schools.

The sheriff's office also has a program for 27 of the school system's 33 elementary schools in the county. The program uses a police supervisor and four sheriff's deputies who rotate among the schools serving as resource officers.

According to a YouTube video from the school system a year ago, Bel Air High School, Halls Cross Roads Elementary School, North Harford High School and Fallston High School are equipped with school safety liaisons — staff members who specialize in school safety. The school system also has one school safety liaison that floats among elementary schools.

Officials with the Harford County Sheriff's Office recently visited schools in Dorchester County where metal detectors, enhanced school entry technology and other technological school safety enhancements have been installed. The visit was designed to help law enforcement in Harford County build a better understanding of what technological advancements can assist with school safety, how they work and how much they would cost, Gahler said.

Harford school officials and law enforcement have cited the cost of the technological security measures as being a barrier. Costs would include purchasing of the infrastructure and salaries for staff needed to operate them.

Despite not having metal detectors in schools, Gahler said he feels all county public schools are safe for students and staff.

"For what is possible in the world and what we are able to do in the fiscal constraints that we operate under, I believe we have very safe schools," Gahler said. "I think what we are seeing right now is just a reaction to the Joppa shooting and everyone being extra attentive to what is going on in the school system."

Gahler encourages all parents to monitor their childrens' online activity and to report things that concern them to both police and school officials.

"We are asking people that if they see something, to say something, because if it is concerning enough to them, we want to know so we can investigate," Gahler said.

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---- Index References ----

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